critical digest

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This Week

Red Roses for Me-Booth 12/28. Gordon Pollock presents new Sean O'Casey play with Eileen Crowe, E. G. Marshall & Patrick O'Neal.

Third Person-President 12/29. David Cline presents new play by Andrew Rosenthal with Louise Albritton, Murray Matheson.

Next Week

Don Juan-Downtown 1/3... Great Sebastians-ANTA 1/4.

Theatre on TV

Dear Brutus-CBS Omnibus 1/8... Peter Pan-NBC 1/9... Blithe Spirit-NBC Ford 1/14... Cat & Fiddle-NBC Leibman 1/21... Good Fairy-NBC Evans 2/1.

Helen Hayes 50th

50th anniversary of Helen Hayes in theatre celebrated by American Theatre Wing Dec 30 ball and champagne supper, plus "Command Performance" of stars portraying stars of yesteryears Dec 30 at Waldorf Astoria. $50 per person.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

The Righteous Are Bold-Holiday 12/22. McClain, Journal American, sole daily critic to approve Frank Carney play directed and produced by Eddie Dowling with a mostly Irish cast. Religious drama which had long run at Dublin's Abbey Theatre was rated as excellent theatre by the Journal critic. Rest of aisle-sitters panned it for not being as effective as it should have been. Atkinson, Times, noted the theme is hard to believe in the simple framework of his literary design. Kerr, Herald Tribune, thought main problem was that leading lady Irene Hayes does not possess the range required for the difficult role. Play might be okay for an art theatre, but not for Broadway, said Coleman, Mirror. While Watts, Post, believed in play, he found much of it pretty naive in its treatment. Granting that play provided shocks as well as thrills, Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, feared production was not the memorable evening it should have been.

Floydada to Matador-Amato 12/21. Bill of 3 Saroyan one-act plays--The Hungerers, Opera-Opera, and Hell Out There presented by Ensemble Theatre was panned by 4 critics--Times, Herald Tribune, Post and World Telegram. Company has no talent on either side of the footlights, leveled Atkinson, Times. Bad acting and muddy writing were the chief faults Herridge, Post, ventured that plays may have been better with better direction. Hawkins, WT&S, summed up the proceedings by noting that a group of intent young actors are mumbling to each other on the dark stage.

ORSON WELLES AT DRAMA DESK

NY drama critics were given a friendly, yet sinister, warning by Orson Welles at Drama Desk luncheon. King Lear star reminded reviewers that Percy Hammond was sole critic to pan Welles' Federal Theatre-all Negro cast Macbeth. Voodoo drummers asked for, and received, permission to do something about "bad man Hammond." Critic died the next day. Welles hoped critics would remember tale when they wrote notice of his City Center production opening Jan 12.

Playhouse Theatre on West 48th St. has a new owner. Ben Marden sold the 994 seat house to A. L Sainer , a theatrical lawyer, for $750,000. Roomful of Roses is the current tenant, and Dancing in the Chequered Shade is slated to openJan 11. House will continue to be rented by new owner to legit attractions.

PLAYS

Victor Borge show closes at Golden after 3 year run , Hot Corner will open at house Jan 25...Marcel Marceau will play at City Center Feb 1-12, filling program spot which had been empty...Amazing Adele will open in late Jan at Winter Garden...Waiting for Godot will open at Music Box Feb 13...Quiet Place closes in Washington Jan 1...Jazz Getaway to open in NY week of March 26...Polly Adler's "A House is Not a Home" to be presented as musical next year by Rex Carlton...Playwrights Company Time Remembered postponed to next season ...Paramount Studios to provide all funds for stage musical Li'l Abner.

PLAYERS

Phyllis Love returned to Bus Stop ...Herbert Machiz will direct Streetcar Named Desire revival...Evelyn Page to replace Shirl Conway, Plain & Fancy...Olive Reeves-Smith and Viola Roach joined My Lady Liza...Boris Tumarin joined Innkeepers... Norwegian star Tore Segeicke to give one woman show at Town Hall April 8...J. Willis Sayre, Seattle Post Intelligencer critic, retired at age 78, and will be replaced by John Voorhees.

VAUDEVILLE

Palace show headed by Gene Wesson, Gordon Polk, Clark Kids, Elia and Michelle, Jay Nemeth and Mello-Mates.

OTHER BROADWAYS

Helen Hayes will appear in Glass Menagerie in Jan at Palm Beach, Fla...G. B. Shaw's last and unfinished play Why She Would Not-A Little Comedy has been completed by Lionel Britton...Porgy and Bess cast opens in Leningrad Dec 26, and in Moscow Jan 10. Next stop is in Warsaw Jan 21.

SUMMER PLAYHOUSES

Show Boat will be presented next summer at Jones Beach Marine Theatre, LI by Guy Lombardo...New summer theatre to be built at Old Lyme, Conn by Wilbur Jordan...Canada's Stratford Shakespearean Festival Company will play for 2 weeks next summer at Edinburgh Festival in Henry V.

THEATRE BURLESQUE NEWS

T. J. Phillips hopes to open his Brooklyn Orpheum theatre next month. License Commissioner O'Connell said he would revoke license if word "burlesque"appears, though Phillips said he will use word in ads and on marquee. Producer also says he will present "family type" entertainment. Theatre is at 574-78 Fulton St, Brooklyn.

THEATRE TV NOTES

20th Century to be presented on CBS-TV April 7...Helen Hayes will do scenes from Dear Brutus on CBS TV Omnibus Jan 8... Sean O'Casey will be interviewed in Jan on NBC Radio Conversations...NBC will present Boy Friend after its tour in 1957... NBC may present 2 hour daytime production of Barretts of Wimpole Street with Katharine Cornell in Feb.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

LEGIT ROUND TABLE... A meeting of union officials to discuss concessions to encourage revivals and vaudeville on Broadway was urged by Coleman, Mirror, who promised to pick up the check at such a round-table. The leaders know that we must have a flourishing theatre, but some of them do not know what is best for everyone concerned.

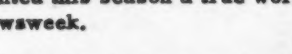
DRAMA MAIL BOX... Current season is rapidly becoming a constant "Ladies Day" with female stars performing prodigious feats to make their plays hits, points out Times reader... A medal should be awarded to Playhouse owner who sold that house to an individual interested in renting to theatre producers rather than renting to parking lot operators, suggests a C. D. subscriber.

THEATRE EATERIES... First class eateries near the theatres listed by McClain, Journal American, include--Sardis-W44, Dinty Moore's-W48, Lobster-W45, Absinthe-W48, Gallagher's-W52, Leone's-W52, Artist & Writer's-W40, and Luchow's-W14.

FUNCTIONS OF CRITICS... Reviewers most important function, points out Chapman, News, is to tell future audiences what kind of a play to expect, to pave the way for the play in the playgoer's mind. Broadway audiences, critic believes, seldom know what to do until the critics tell them what to do... NY drama critics should turn in their passes and go home or start buying their own tickets, suggests William Saroyan in Times. Playwright betsthey would soon be up in second balcony, and that their reviews would suddenly come to life in a way that would be useful to fans who buy those seats.

BEST SEASON... Theatregoers have been so unreasonably hungry this season that even Grandma's Diary, Black Eyed Susan and Men of Distinction would be hits, reports Chapman, News... Current season has been best in years, adds Coleman, Mirror... NY's theatres have presented this season a true world theatre appreciated on a universal level, concluds Newsweek.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Method actors work from the inside out, Nancy Wickwire, Cherry Orchard, told Herridge, Post. They try to feel and live the part. Actress learned at Old Vic school that it's not important how the actor feels, but how he makes the audience feel.



PROS & CONS BY TMK

Floydada to Matador presented 2 Saroyan plays that you could neither see nor hear, and one that you could. The effect of all was the same--bad acting, bad direction of playlets written before author had fallen in love with "the beautiful people."

The Righteous Are Bold is a noisy religious Irish drama that was unbelievable to at least one member of the audience. Mostly Irish cast who shouted and/or mumbled in variety of accents did not help turn sermon into interesting play.

OFF BROADWAY

Downtown Theatre will open Jan 3 with Moliere's Don Juan at 83 E 4 with Walter Beakel directing... Clef Theatre opens Jan 7 with a series of Sat. nite performances of Rustic Chivalry and The Barron-Almost at 44 Second Ave.

Equity Library Community Theatre will play My Three Angels, Lillion, Best Foot Forward and Curious Savage at 4 city high schools this spring... Broadway Chapel Players will present Herod the Great for 2 weeks at Church of Saint Clement, Alexandria, Virginia... Our Town to be presented at Henry Street Playhouse Jan 6-8... Lotte Lenya has returned to cast of Three Penny Opera.

Romeo and Juliet at Shakespeare Theatre Workshop was mildly okayed as a nice way to introduce newcomers to the classic by Herridge, Post. Geor, Variety, also filed mild pro, noting that group may make its mark if it has the stamina to stick around while it develops. Both critics complained of the uneven acting in cast.

An Evening of Shaw consisting of 2 Shaw plays--Dark Lady of Sonnets and Admirable Bashville--was lauded in Equity Library production by Variety mugg. Twin bill was an ELT stunner with lucid tasteful direction, nicely stylized acting and sprightly stage design.

Watts, Post, noted that among the encouraging signs of the theatre's new vitality is the activity of the ambitious and enterprising off-Broadway groups. Phoenix, 4th St Theatre and Circle in Square groups were singled out for praise.

THEATRE BOOK COMMENTS

"Advice to a Young Critic" by Bernard Shaw(Crown) rated by McClain, Journal American, as a charming and instructional volume. Book should be a must for theatre fans everywhere.

THEATRE RECORD COMMENTS

"Pipe Dream" original cast album (RCA) shows Rodgers & Hammerstein score is among their best, okays Variety record reviewer.

"Noel Coward at Las Vegas" disc (Columbia) approved by Wilson, Times ..."Fabulous Mae West" disc (Decca) rated by Times man as relentless display of her talent for single entendre.

THEATRE TV COMMENTS

Salome with Eartha Kitt in Oscar Wilde play on CBS TV Omnibus made for fascinating if somewhat offbeat viewing, reported Chan, Variety. Though performance of Kitt was panned for lacking consistency and strength.

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